

WHAT'S *New*

in the Metropolitan Police Department



*A weekly update for residents, visitors,
and workers in the District of Columbia*

Friday, December 26, 2003

CHIEF RAMSEY OFFERS HOLIDAY GREETINGS AND THANKS TO THE MPDC AND OUR PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY

As we wrap up another year together, I want to take a moment to thank the brave men and women of the Metropolitan Police Department, as well as our partners in the community, for your dedication to neighborhood safety over the past year. As Chief of the MPDC, I have the privilege of working with some of the finest law enforcement professionals there are, as well as some of the most energetic and committed community members anywhere. This past year, the MPDC has been blessed with some positive developments, and yet we continue to face challenges in other areas. Our homicide rate—which in early May was up by more than 25 percent—has now declined by more than 7 percent over 2002 levels, and total violent crime is down once again in our city, according to preliminary figures. While many factors have contributed to this positive trend, our officers and residents have played important roles by working together and building the types of partnerships that result in safer neighborhoods. It is this same commitment to working together that will help us bring down other types of crimes that have risen over the past year, including robberies and stolen autos. I am pleased to report that participation in Orange, Red, and (now, in the Fourth District) Blue Hat patrols remained strong in 2003, as has attendance at our regular Police Service Area (PSA) meetings. This year, thousands of residents took part in two lively Crime Forums and in Citizen Summit III; we learned more about your concerns and began to build even stronger partnerships. Many residents came forward to share their thoughts about our PSA restructuring plan—vital input that will make the final product more responsive to community needs. And outside of these formal mechanisms, neighbors stepped forward to help one another and the police in ways large and small. As we look to the future, I am well aware of the challenges we face. DC remains far too violent for a city of our size and stature. Too many of our neighborhoods continue to face persistent quality-of-life problems. And the threat of terrorism remains a constant in both our individual and civic lives. But I am confident that by continuing to work together, our police officers and our community partners will rise to meet these and other challenges. In this season of togetherness, I encourage our officers and residents to take a moment to thank one another for making a difference in our communities. And for the new year, I encourage all of our residents to get to know their PSA officers, to attend PSA meetings and to get involved in other community policing activities. The more our residents are involved, the better and stronger our communities will be. On behalf of the entire MPDC Command Staff, I extend special thanks for the community's support and assistance throughout the past year. And regardless of how you and your family choose to celebrate this holiday, I wish you the warmest of greetings and best for the year ahead.

—Charles H. Ramsey, Chief of Police

METROPOLITAN POLICE ON HEIGHTENED ALERT AFTER NATIONAL TERRORIST THREAT LEVEL IS RAISED TO ORANGE

With the Department of Homeland Security raising the National Threat Level from Yellow (elevated) to Orange (high) this past week, the MPDC heightened its own emergency response level from Yellow to Orange. (The MPDC has a five-level emergency response system that is similar to the color-coded, federal system.) On Sunday, December 21, the MPDC activated its Joint Operations Command Center, including the network of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras that are mounted primarily in the downtown area of the District. The cameras will be recording during this period of heightened alert. Also, the Police Department has enhanced its security around DC government facilities and other critical installations, and is working in conjunction with local and federal agencies. MPDC officers remain on regular, eight-hour shifts, and the Department advises residents that the heightened emergency response level has not diminished regular patrols in DC neighborhoods. Residents are encouraged to be aware of their surroundings and remain vigilant. Anyone who observes a suspicious package or activity is advised to call the police immediately using 9-1-1.

MPDC OFFERS VEHICLE THEFT PREVENTION TIPS DURING 2004 WASHINGTON AUTO SHOW

In addition to checking out the latest in new automobiles and accessories, visitors to the 2004 Washington Auto Show can get valuable information and resources on protecting their vehicles from theft, courtesy of the MPDC and the Maryland and Washington DC Anti-Car Theft (ACT) Committee. The Washington Auto Show runs from Friday, December 26, 2003, through Sunday, January 4, 2004, in the new Washington Convention Center. Detectives from the MPDC's Auto Theft Unit and other area law enforcement agencies will be passing out safety tips and information on how to reduce the chances of your vehicle being stolen. The Maryland and DC ACT Committee will have its "Hot Car" (Neon) on display, with demonstrations on how to protect your vehicles. Unlike other crime types, auto theft has increased in DC in recent years, rising almost 40 percent between 2000 and 2002. To help reverse this trend, auto theft detectives will be encouraging motorists to sign up for "Watch Your Car," a national vehicle theft prevention program that both the MPDC and Maryland police agencies participate in.

NEWS & NOTES

Holiday Schedules. In observance of the Christmas and New Year's holidays, most administrative offices of the MPDC's will be closed on Thursday, December 25, Friday, December 26, and Thursday, January 1 (2004). Police patrols, emergency communications and other essential operations will be fully staffed on these dates. Administrative offices will be open on Friday, January 2, 2004.

Drunk Driving Prevention. The MPDC will have additional resources out this holiday season—including sobriety checkpoints and underage drinking enforcement teams—to prevent drunk driving. Celebrants are encouraged to use designated drivers, public transportation or the SoberRide program, which provides free cab rides home through January 1, 2004. To access SoberRide, call (800) 200-TAXI or go online to <http://www.soberride.com>

Traffic Cameras on the Web. Motorists in the District can now get up-to-date information on traffic conditions—24 hours a day, seven days a week—through a network of 52 District Department of Transportation cameras that are accessible via DDOT's website at http://www.ddot.dc.gov/services/traffic_cameras/index.shtm#

- ① Read the news release at: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/news/news.asp?sid=2478>
- ① For more information on the MPDC's homeland security preparations, as well as links to other useful emergency preparedness resources, click on: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/family/emergencypreparedness.shtm>
- ① Learn more about the MPDC's use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), including current camera locations, at: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/comm/CCTV.shtm>

- ① Read the news release at: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/news/news.asp?sid=2486>
- ① For more information about Watch Your Car in DC, and to register for the free, voluntary program, call (877) DC2-STOP or go online to: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/serv/programs/wyc.shtm>
- ① Even if you can't make it to the Auto Show, vehicle owners can get auto theft prevention tips on the MPDC website at: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/traffic/autotheft.shtm>

DATA BOX

Homicides (as of 12/24/03)

- 2003: 239
- 2002: 258
- % Change: -7.1%

Traffic Fatalities (as of 12/24/03)

- 2003: 65
- 2002: 50
- % Change: +30.0%